


2018

Vantage Point: Fall 2018

Vantage Point

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Point: Vantage Point: Fall 2018

VANTAGE POINT



FALL
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Vantage Point

Fall 2018

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Letter From the Editors

“War is what happens when language fails.”

— Margaret Atwood

Language, like all mediums of expression, is brittle. Perhaps now more than ever, it's important to break the boundaries of art to discover truth. As fall slips into winter, enjoy the destructions found within these pages.

— The Editors

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Genealogy

By Emma Highfield

My dad was raised where
the river runs to pearl buttons
and the sounds off frets of guitars
mimic the color of the sky.

His best friend, twelve years old,
on the cusp of being anything,
couldn't see the sunlight past
the color of his skin.

Now he speaks to him in empty
parking lots through biscuit dough.
My dad wails to the TV screen,
cries for all the black boys

still dying.
Their sunlight taken.
My dad's papa
was a preacher.

He didn't understand
why his son couldn't find
God in the tobacco barns
or buckwheat fields

only the compacted bones

of the middle passage.
The same bones rumble in him.
No God there to save them.

We celebrate winter solstice but
his accent slips out, thick molasses,
cool-whip salad. His forefathers
sneaking through his lips tainted

with liters of whiskey a week,
diluting his blood, the same
blood once pulsating under
white cloaks, hard r's of

neighbors,
friends,
fathers.

SoCo makes his stomach so sick
with its sweet push
to erase the memories
of slave's choke-cherried backs.

My dad was raised where Faulkner
spoke truths and neighbors secret recipes
were born in the fingers of the girl
they strung from the backyard tree,

a tire swing dances there now,
her name forgotten
but her dinners
and desserts passed down,

ascribed to white plantation wives.
My dad drowns his histories
and heritages
in whiskey on the rocks.

Script of an Upcoming University Advertisement, or What Donors Must See While Climaxing

By Seth Wade

Video begins with various glamor shots of Green Mountain University dining halls (on a good day). There's a warm velvet hue accompanied with faint, groovy tunes from the 80s. Staff pour crisp petals of spinach into glistening metal bins. Students drift between aisles brimming with veggie casseroles and artisanal pizzas. Other students wait in line to enter, thumbing their Student IDs nervously, biting their lips. They tiptoe over each other's shoulders, eager to snag even the faintest peek at what nourishment their brilliant university will bestow upon them today.

Cut to CHANGE AGENTS, two young go-getters, employees of Green Mountain University, slathered in faux leather, standing near a table with a platter of grass-fed meats and organic veggies. Nametags stick to their uniforms. They speak in voices so smooth you'll swoon before you can even say community engagement.

JUSTICE: I'm Change Agent Justice!

ENVIROMENTAL: And I'm Change Agent Environmental!

JUSTICE: We're here to show off our goods—

ENVIROMENTAL: —the raw, truly high quality stuff Green Mountain University provides.

JUSTICE: First time at our dining hall? No worries. It's easy.

ENVIROMENTAL: Hell, it's Vermont—we take everything slow.

JUSTICE: Real slow.

JUSTICE *whips their riding crop into their gloved hands, with a wetty SMACK.*

Cut to close-up of a mouth, gasping.

Cut to GIRL walking towards trash, compost, and recycling bins. She's sweating, her tray shaking as she approaches.

ENVIROMENTAL: Mhmm. Here at Green Mountain University, we believe in exploring and building skills necessary to create a regenerative present and future for life at all scales—and that mission (*close up of JUSTICE smacking a plump and juicy avocado with a riding crop*) starts in your mouth.

Cut to BOY looking at an Eco-Ware container as he traces its edges with the pads of his fingers. His eyes widen, penetrated by the realization that its BPA-free. He notices a particularly girthy Eco-Ware spork, and blushes.

JUSTICE: For just \$7.50, you can slide into our Eco-Ware program, where you can help cut out the excessive waste of take-out packaging by participating in this wonderful reusable take-out container program.

ENVIROMENTAL: You'll be in and out of the dining hall faster than you can say: renewable eco-consumer awareness efficiency.

JUSTICE: And we're so proud to announce we've surpassed our own goal set for 2020: all dining hall food is now 20% real!

STUDENT SLAVE 1, *wearing an eyeless gimp suit, walks by, unzipping the slit for their mouth.*

STUDENT SLAVE 1: Wait—what's that even mean?

ENVIROMENTAL zips SLAVE 1's mouth closed, pushes them away.

JUSTICE: And if you're ever feeling thirsty—

ENVIROMENTAL: Don't worry, we got you.

Close-up of mouth returns—this time, they're licking their lips.

JUSTICE: We've banned bottled water—

ENVIROMENTAL: —the only university in the country to take such a bold, innovative step—

JUSTICE: —so now you can drink sustainably, too.

STUDENT SLAVE 2 *risks from underneath the table of fine meats and veggies, bound in a black harness, spitting out a red ball gag.*

SLAVE 2: But then we'll just buy soda from the machines all 'round campus, isn't that—

JUSTICE *promptly shoves the ball gag back in SLAVE 2's mouth, pushes them back down.*

ENVIROMENTAL: We're entirely committed to sustainability, to your sense of political (ENVIROMENTAL *drags the tip of a riding crop around the lip of a bowl of fair trade chickpeas*) satisfaction.

GIRL *is about to scrape moist quinoa off her plate, her face beading with anticipation.* BOY *can barely keep still as he places his whole hand on the Eco-Ware container, unable to resist its enticing, teasing levels of recyclability. The close-up*

mouth's lips part, panting deeply.

Random PASSERSBY, two newly admitted students donning string-tie name tags, walk up to CHANGE AGENTS.

PASSERBY 1: Is it true that Green Mountain University still invests in oil?

PASSERBY 2: And that after students protested in the 90s, they planted trees where they held their rallies in order to obstruct future protests?

PASSERBY 1: And is Green Mountain University really partnered with TD Bank, one of the corporations who funded the Dakota Access Pipeline?

ENVIROMENTAL *and* JUSTICE *pause, share a look of worry, until they slowly raise their riding crops, and begin swatting PASSERSBY 1 and 2's faces until they flee, yelping in pain.*

ENVIROMENTAL: So, what do you say? Wanna go on this journey with us?

GIRL *begins scraping her food into the bin, BOY picks up the eco-ware box, the close-up mouth stretches out.*

JUSTICE: You ready to live—

ENVIROMENTAL and JUSTICE: —sustainably?

GIRL: Oh-God-Yes! *Her eyes scrunch and her hair blows upwards as she vigorously scrapes the quinoa into the compost bin. Her squeals match the squeaks of her Eco-Ware spoon scratching the plate.*

BOY: Yes, yes—sustain me, sustain me right now! *His knees wobble and bend as he begins moaning, his eyes locking sensuously with his Eco-Ware.*

Close-up of mouth returns, now yelling in pleasure.

Cut to Green Mountain logo.

JUSTICE: Green Mountain University. We dine with your needs, and the Earth, in mind. Join us, in dining, in thinking, and in living—sustainably.

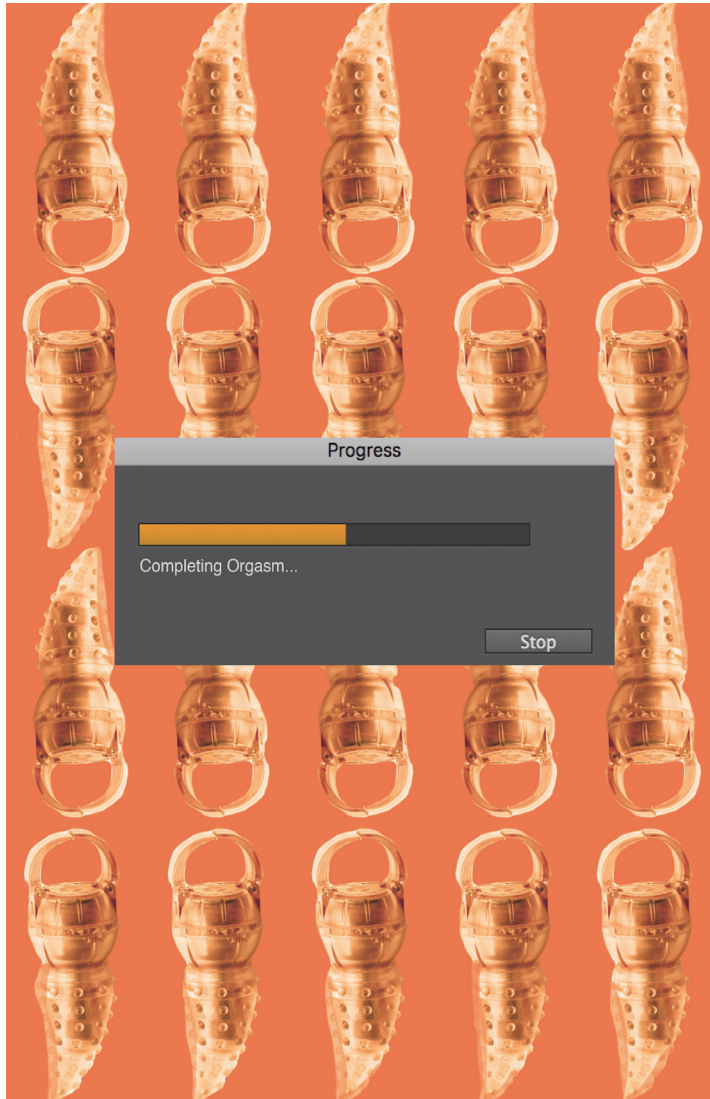
Screen fades to black.

SLAVE 2 (*screen still black*), *after making a slight spitting sound*): Wait—what are these? (*Brief pause*). How can muffins be mindful?! Does the university even care about—

SLAVE 2's *voice becomes garbled, like their mouth is stuffed again.*

Self Love

By Dominique Boccanfuso



Places of Plunder

By Izzy Siedman

I want to write to you about the things that have been under my fingernails. Dirt, purple nail polish so dark its black, questions and dead skin and living skin from the back of his neck. Splinters and blueberry scone crumbs, corners of book pages, drugs, sweat, water and songs as shattering as bones.

How about I write a guestbook of the fingers that have been inside me. I'll write first about the thumb inside my mouth, the index fishing for eyelashes under my lids, then the middle finger fishing too, hooking in my vulva. For now we'll skip the ring finger, its destiny is yet to be seen. Then all five digits sliding through my ribs, a few more on my tongue, some of my own down my throat, and last but not least a pinky pushed into the purple cavity left behind by a baby tooth.

I could write to you about the things that have gone down my shower drain, like water and salt water and a snarl of hair, once straight strands gone rot with knots. A few pounds of makeup, shampoo and conditioner from two separate brands, poorly sung words, tiny paper hearts from the time a bomb went off in the bath. Just a few hundred ideas, desires, soy shaving cream and a little bit of blood.

Night Talkers

By Evann Orleck-Jetter

You get off your bike as the sky turns black and blue and lay out a blanket in the field. The air is so warm on your skin and it's dark but there are fireflies at this time of year, flickering at the peripheries of your eyes. And then he arrives, and your heart, your heart. The way he strolls towards you. Towards **you**. Sandy hair and red lips, fuller than your own, with an easy confidence that sends ripples through the grass. He wraps his arm around you, sticks claws in your side.

"Hey there Caroline."

"Hey Jules"

"I missed you."

"Really?" You look down briefly at the grass, feigning indifference.

"Cus' I didn't miss you at all."

He laughs.

This thing, whatever it is, has been going on for two months. Sixty days. Beyond casual. At school he'll sometimes talk to you and your friends at lunch, ask how your weekend was. Wink at you in the halls. Nothing more.

These night meetings are the closest you get. You look into his eyes as he pushes inside you and will him to love you. In the hours between midnight and two in the morning, he is stripped bare, no pretenses, no beautiful boy lined with barbed wire, and it is then that you feel the most whole and the most empty. Because one-sided love is not sugar and sweet, it's hard rock candy dipped in bleach, it's a longing that gnaws at you like a parasite. And he tells you things too, how he worries about his little brother being picked on, about his asshole friends who he's afraid to stand up to. You tell him that you worry you are invisible, and he assures you that is not the case.

So when he bites into your neck you don't mind, really.

The following Friday night he invites you to his place, makes bone soup with your pinky finger and the flesh on your left thigh. Grates your nails for seasoning. He drinks up the broth and licks his lips and looks at you hungrily. "You are so beautiful," he tells you, and pulls you close and kisses you on your closed eyelids, once, twice.

Saturday he burns cigarettes on your arms and carves the constellations on your back. Sunday, he can't wait to see you again. You lie entwined in the woods, inhale pine and moss and musky cologne. And this is it, this must be real now. Eyes adjusting to the dark, you place your head on his shoulder and he bites into your cheek. "What big teeth you have," you say.

"All the better to eat you with, my dear." And he does.

On Wednesday night, when you always meet, he texts you. *Hey Caroline. I have so much work to do tonight. So tired. Another time?*

All right yeah, no worries.

It's the same on Monday, then Thursday, then new iterations of the same excuse. *I told my friends I'd go to this party at Molly's. Sorry. And I'm just so busy right now, I'll let you know when I'm free.* It doesn't make sense. You swallow the panic like he once swallowed your lungs, and stare blankly at the phone, willing it to love you.

Karen, fucking Karen. Rachel tells you after biology. She's the reason for the harsh silence; it's been two weeks since you've heard a word from him. Karen. Tall, blonde, loved by all. A sort of Blake Lively minus the looks. *She's not even pretty, you tell yourself.* Ask anyone, they would say that you were the beauty. *You've always had that at least.*

He walks with her in the halls, the power couple. All laughter and light. He glances at you, the stranger now, girl he once knew and flashes a kind of apologetic smile. It burns into your skull and when you close your eyes you see those lips that you have memorized, and the way they felt, cool and plump, on your skin. How his sharpened teeth once sank into your collarbone, forcing you to cover up even though the air thickened and humidity rolled in waves

through creaky windows.

You remember the first time, the shock as he asked if he could stick push pins in your flesh.

“Why?”

“I won’t hurt you. It’s just something I like, every once in awhile. It makes us closer.”

It doesn’t make sense, not at all, but you let it go. Perhaps it’s his way of showing affection. Or ownership.

The small pricks and scratches escalate. He steals your back molar, cuts open your breasts just to stitch them back together. But it doesn’t hurt, you swear. The scars always heal with time, the tooth grows back, yellow stained, but it’s there. You look at astonishment at your chest, the evidence of his violence erased. Like he was never there. And you miss it, briefly, the reminder that he was.

It’s Monday and you sit in the school greenhouse during lunch. Raggedly breathing in and out, watching drops form on green leaves, enveloped by fog. Trying not to cry. And then you hear two boys talking by the lockers. You know one of those voices, the voice that still, after all this time, makes your skin sizzle and burn as it drifts assuredly down the hallway.

“How are things with Karen?”

His voice now: “I dunno. I feel bad but I’m just not that into her I guess. Like I can tell she’s getting attached, and it’s only been a few weeks.” A weight lifts off your shoulders. He doesn’t want to be with Karen, perfect Karen.

“Huh.”

“I’ve been thinking about Caroline too.” Your breath is shallow now, raw.

“Oh really?”

“I guess Caroline is just ... easier, ya know?”

“Easier for sure,” Drew laughs.

“Karen’s just a lot of work; I don’t think I want anything serious right now. And Caroline’s the type of girl you want to be with when things aren’t serious.” He looks up at Drew and laughs, “So yeah, it’s cus’ she’s easy.”

“Shit Jules, You’re one cold son-of-a-bitch.” He says it in a lilting, praising way, like he’s congratulating an Olympian or an open heart surgeon on a job well done.

“What can I say, the ladies love it.”

Drew grins. “You’re sick, man.”

Lockers slam shut. The final bell rings. You sit paralyzed among Lilies and Thyme and dark purple Hyacinth. You could take the burns and push pins and split lips. You could believe in them, in a twisted way. Oddly, it’s your pride that hurts more. He manipulated you, bruised you, with every cut his eyes shone brighter, his lips more red. Monster. And you suddenly feel very sad for Karen too.

“Caroline!” You’re on the path home, just ten minutes away, and you shudder at the sound of that voice. His voice. “Hey, wait up!” He doesn’t know that you heard anything, has no reason to. “How are you? Can we talk?” He’s walking quickly, trying to catch up. And soon he’s at your side.

You stare straight ahead. “I don’t want to talk.”

“Caroline, come on. I miss you. I feel awful about how everything went down.”

It’s so obvious now, you can’t believe you never recognized it before. Monster.

“Leave me alone,” you say, voice rising.

He shrugs his shoulders, as if to say *What did I do that was so bad?* “Caroline, please. You don’t miss those night talks?”

You look straight into his blood-orange eyes. “You’re disgusting.”

He stops, thrown off by the rejection. And you take that opportunity to look at him, really look at him, and he is tired. Hollowed cheeks and gray skin, eyelashes like cobwebs. The beautiful boy withers in the daylight. You

breathe in sharply and continue on the path.

He's calling your name, desperately now, "Caroline!" and he's smiling in that way he once smiled at you. And for a moment, you want to call back to him, envelop yourself in his arms for just a bit. But that fades. And you are running now, running from those fangs, and it is into something bright and light and beautiful.

The Paper Doll Ballet

By Lydia Moreman

I sit at my broad oak desk, and crumple the paper in front of me, cursing the words on the page. I reach for another piece of paper, and it dances away from me. I reach again as it folds itself up into a paper doll, and she curtsies. She bends down to another piece of paper, which springs up as her partner, bowing from his waist. They leap in unison across the wood on their toes, strings of words forming in my mind, flowing from one to the next like their feet as they step. I wish to spin and swirl as they do, blurring at the edges of my eyes, and so the ballerina turns her hand towards me and asks me to dance.

Penitent Thieves

By Dan DeDomenico

We all have stolen fire from the day that we were born,
and since that day we, thieves ourselves, have hardly ever worn
the shackles of the condemned, nor their expressions, grim.
Yet who among us has not known that in the secret act of sin
the wickedness we're not without, it must come from within.

Olive skin is splintered where the sun line meets the heart.
Ribs, they hang in order, backs are arched as you depart.
Heads, they hang like shepherds' hooks, eyes leering towards the frenzied
crowd.
You're just a thief, not a murderer, and for that much can be proud.
Console your weeping mothers, stoic fathers, glance at sons you've disavowed.

Weave your twisted gazes through the masses gathered round to watch.
Hear the cold denouncements of the souls you have debauched.
Brothers in crime, not punishment, and they'll hastily tell
any in the mob that they hate all your deeds as well.
Laugh at them and all the other cowards that would wish you sent to hell.

When the lambs do clamor and the wolves bark back no time is lost.
They're eager for your mounting on the cross.
When the rusty nails drive their jagged sides into bone,
lock your eyes and lick your lips to spit
upon the helmets that have dragged you from your home.
Penitent thieves – feel sorry – but for yourselves alone

when i fell asleep the night you told me i was beautiful (9/20-10/2/17)

By Sacha Yanulavich

i didn't lie back and think of england, i thought of you and your small
rough hands covered in the coconut rum dripping down the sides of your
plastic cup (stolen from the dollar store) tracing over and over the inside of
my thigh, your nails leaving cross-stitch patterns of lilies and roses, stamens,
pistils, stems, those little flowering buds born from dirt and shit ready to pop
open and photosynthesize- enjoying your needlework, how it made me bleed
red sugar water nectar for the hummingbirds of my garden, their hurly-burly
wings shimmering

Up from East Avenue

By Henry Motto

East Avenue is a long way off, I whisper to all the left behind soldiers
Still almost bursting with beer. Picking up the bloody solo cups off the floor,
I see a map laid out in high heel stamps,
Where “X” marks unsanctioned beds.

I have always despised plastic folding tables,
They support nothing but poor pong shots and vintage makeup trails.
My knees conspire against me but I have hooks in their eyes
To control their momentum and I yank

Like a marionette I arise with dependence on strings.
I leak out of the door in puddles
In my mind I think of Napster and Piracy,
In my pocket there are stolen bottle caps.

I heard that I will be fined if I leave my recycling out any night other than
Monday
I stumble into the cans and cartons spewed, over blue cassettes
And find a banana peel plastered to my inner thigh,
I pull ferociously on the strings.

I, the gracious gyroscope,
Look towards the steep hill that leads up from the lake
At the top, lies headstones
And Kampus Kitchen that closes at 10:00 p.m.

I took three steps, no maybe four
Before I realized I was halfway up
And halfway down,
Suddenly, no keys.

Blue

By Izzy Siedman

Your eyes are not the color of a summer sky
Or lake Champlain deep and glittering blue
They aren't Libby's latest electric hair dye
Because all I think when I see them is you you you.

Willa Cather, Don't Burn Your Letters

By Sacha Yanulavich

Oh, you sad song pioneers, spreading the lips of the land between your fingers, the gritty dirt sticking to the webs of skin like leeches, broken into so many minute particles, so many tiny galaxies, those captors of your weary hands.

Can I tell you a secret? Sometimes the seagulls here make me feel so inside-out. I watch them flutter around department store parking lots gobbling bits of left-behind soft pretzel, building their ramshackle nests on cold metal light poles,

and I want to scream, “Can’t you see we’re landlocked? Can’t you see there’s nothing for you here, nothing to help you here. Home is farther than your beady little eyes can even squint to see, so deep over the horizon.”

They would just screech and descend, beak mouths in my hair, eyes blindfolded by feathers, their golden claws all speculum and scalpel blade, grabbing with one foot, tearing with another; pruning is the most destructive method of regeneration.

Did you know that Prometheus was rescued from the Caucasus because Chiron agreed to die for him? Chiron, the wounded healer, was only truly whole once his immortal body was split into stars— did you feel the same?

Listen to the cicadas, hear them keening, and ask them, for me, “Why?” There is no pain in sunsets, not anymore, not when you can see the orange light hitting your sandy knees as you hug them to your chest on the porch swing and know that this is all there is of the mud you were borne from and that that’s fine. It has always been fine.

SPRING, MAMA!

after Willem de Kooning's Villa Borghese, 1960

By Anna Gibson

Dash across, once more, and back again — catch up!
Be inside in a moment, Honey-Pie, please save the nags.
Irritating and floppy-headed kiddos sneak-snicker around the morning
and you, my friend, have misplaced your smock.

Coffee whiffs quiver in the cha-cha breeze under rebellious nostrils.
This way or that? It's no use trying to stop that headless bride
of mine — she'll just keep on spinning, now a downturned lily
fleeing the scene mid-air to someone else's tearful kiwi-dawn.

Buzzes muffled indoors — the lonesome light still, stiller
and grey-pink forever. Imagine, for instance, a pleasant sedative
cottage on a hill for your remaining hundreds of days. On the good
days, you'll attend to each room of your body with sensitive hands.

Dew on the mind, dew on the toes: won't be there much longer.
If you were still around you'd huff and puff out the back door,
my shoes in hand: scold, scold, scold — I'd catch a cold! Just fold
it up, scratch it out — no, leave it. Wheel you now, quiet vegetable,

out from behind the Spanish hummingbird blockade to let meander
your cataract glazes in the direction of fading stars. They cool
and struggle to poke through that daytime blanket, suffocating
lighter blues, rainbow gills fluttering overtime.

Blue bill, beware! The Springtime Monster is on his way

through the poppy field, ravenous along the lily pond after
a treacherous journey. Nothing ever wilted so bright, so don't stop
moving. Who fills up with disdain for a day like today?

When a Predator Finds Your Escape Plans

By Ali Wood

In front the trail stretches
narrow as a horse spine
in thick, blue slabs of ice
dotted with red pigment,
innumerable slices of blood.
We don't know where
it came from –
my friend says an old dog,
I think a sick and menstruating
animal stabbing their hooves
through the ground
like ice picks, squabbling
forward before some predator
sniffs them out and follows
the hard lines of hot piss
cutting through packed snow
in deep trenches.

My friend picked up leftover band-aids
lying on the wooden floor
and she laughs, *thank god*
the wound wasn't fresh. Several weeks
ago I burned my arm, spilled hot tea,
the skin pink and flaking off
in clean sheets, and I asked,
could I have a bandage,
so I won't scratch it anymore.

I didn't tell her about my other arm,
the lines even and straight rungs
of a ladder cutting through skin
in deep trenches. I don't know where
I was climbing. Only that I was.

Spuds

By Dominique Boccanfuso



Resurrecting Pan in Three Easy Steps

By Seth Wade

Step One: Eradicating Your Gods

Sea throbs in parlous breath and I'm ankle-deep in moon tar, steeped in dark, taking a selfie. And failing. My battery but a sputter, no filter nets these stars and my flash is foggy.

Fuck Orion. Look at him—photogenic bastard.

Beside this sea, through eyes salting: a fat hazel doe, its eyes dripping crimson, its jaw flopping open, wheezing out *you are only human*.

I howl, drumming my skull to the beat of hateful bliss, which feels like ascension, a warm tonic in my stomach, like something home cooked.

Step Two: Not Reporting Anything

I do not want to be punished. I never saw the point in unnecessary woe. Why spore misery?

Penance is just masochism in drag.

Step Three: Forgetting

Jowls gunked in sorrow slobber I lie on my belly, in an iron fire escape webbed between brick lecture halls, holding a rotary toy from fisher-price, limply, I

yank the cord, the arrow spins and *the cow says: please do not leave your baggage unattended.*

Rain reek mingles with waning snow while gutters flow in hazel, mass suicide litters pavement in pinkgray worm curls while admitted students sip Chai, then halt, before a stone soldier—they can't stop coughing—and *the dog says: unattended baggage may be removed or destroyed by security services.*

When I close my eyes I see the undersides of spiders, bellies like tortoise shells, legs flicking inwards in backwards bloom; these scrunched brutes leak lead strings, entwining, my vision quilting, so I open and *the cat says: please have your picture identification out and ready.*

Now we pluck apart, along with brick, now unstitched, that floats away as people dissemble like dolls: parts popping and hovering off, from lip to nail, from wrist to pits, the edges of everything collapsing, the colors of everything cannibalizing, and *the horse says: report any suspicious activity to security services.*

A Selfish Girl's Love Poem

By Sunny Nagpaul

In splendor and in nothing
in stolen and sore notes
curled in your hair,

with the hum of your body disguised,
I'll sing.

I used to wonder about ice
how it melts into tea
and the two become one in a slow
embraced show
I'm left with tea that tastes a fraction of how it could.

In splendor and in nothing,
for the first time I heard a
crazy rhythm of you and tasted
a slithering request to leave you
I ran
and loose arcs and capes of your thoughts
taught my shadow a dance
I could hardly sing to.

It must have been too much,
trying to stand against my mouth
having tasted you
I looked in fog for fractions—

an outline of myself I left
in a grave
gently
a laughing moon took all the light

and left me in dark
with silhouettes of your body embraced,
slithering in a song
I could hardly sing to.

In splendor and in nothing,
I lost my shadow the way I lost my ghost.
In a sore and stolen dance
danced too loud and curled in a dull
hum, the kind my heart makes
when it thinks it's alone

did I tell you, I think I'm in love
with a rose that pretends to be my blood

the dreadful music of me
and what it likes to hear of splendor
is nothing.

madness comes in many forms

By Claire Maroney

you are an ethereal psychopath
bright eyes
mouth curled upward
bursting with energy

skiing in the bathroom
rum runs through my veins
I smoke cigarettes sometimes

dancing barefoot
through mashed potato snow piles
newborn creatures
slipping in sloppiness

raw, open shamelessness
youth and excitement
this feels familiar
like a favorite, forgotten album

solace for your sinus infection
day after drinking dehydration
sunglass lens is on the loose

this time is kept in my memory
as if it's a bottled-up concoction
preserved with the smell of cloves and lavender
and in shades of pink and orange lipstick

Born Again?

By Chris Soychak

If
the phoenix is born and born again in fire
does it choke on the smoke and ash
of its own making?

If
molting feathers adorn its side
do they burn and blister
a reminder of skin?

If
they truly remember all,
must it learn to fly again
or does it want to?

If
it burns bright, brilliant
is its own spark first required?
Or must it wait and hope?

A cast of liquid metal must die to gleam,
while shooting stars are just dying stones.
A bonfire is never started with its death unassured.

If
the phoenix is born and born again in fire—
If.

The Low Kingdom

By Sofia Hurwitz

Hips roll like crystal singing bowls in the morning.
I tip them over your open chest, crawl out of bed, look in the mirror.
“You are a low kingdom of a woman,” I tell myself clearly.

Even when the image before me is a fog of limbs and needles,
I can hear my voice as if it is a persistent drum beat,
that will call in all the forces that I have always needed.

I clutch my stomach in its eternal reverberation and
tell it very slowly, “you are
a low kingdom.”

And the slopes feel longer, the glide and the dents.
the stomach softens and the womb nods its small head.

and the hand goes below the belly and I feel the pulse there.
This is where it all started. Every king, queen, and castle.

From the seat of my pelvis I watch the fortress consume me,
the bricks and mortar building, the endless staircases and rooms.
I see the soldiers with their plates of silver, arms strong and tired;
vines like a fine mist up the sides of the spires.
It grows far past my torso, past my heart, past my crown,
tiny men all roaming and buzzing like strange insects abounding.

I am searching for the throne now.
I have been all my life.

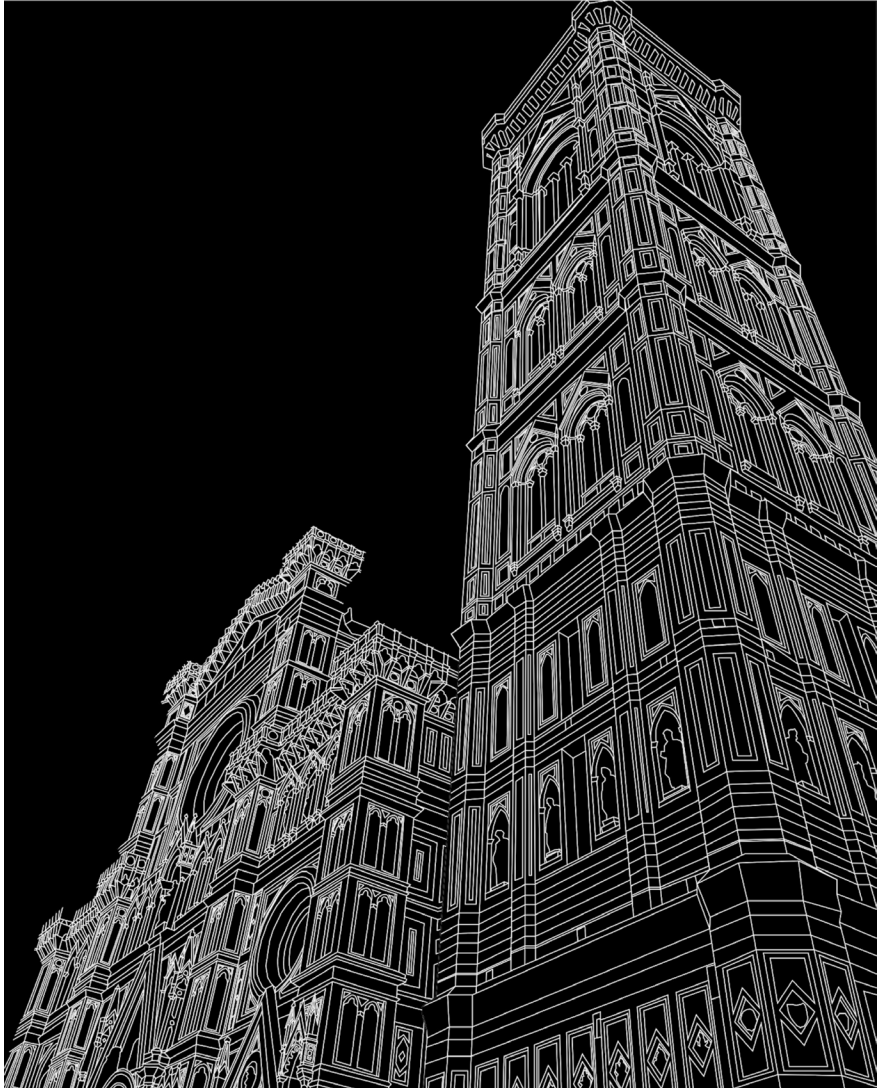
Hand hovering over my stomach, I spin it counter-clockwise,
brewing the sacrum, I stir up sinew, salt, and spit.
Blood that tastes like apricots and runs hot and violet.
Flesh as tart as plum and a love that is sweet and silent.
A moat that surrounds it all, and the waves grow strong and heavy,
I watch it fall into the castle's sides, bringing up sludge and sediment.
And the structures and the soldiers crumble into rubble.
The water loosens every brick; the swords fall and tumble.
And from the dust and blackened, broken limbs,
I see it in a cloud of iridescent mist.

glossy wood standing sturdy, bathed in decadent velvet and silk.

I feel the glass scratch my feet as I brave each simple step,
and when I get to my throne, I straighten my crown and softly sit.

A Sketch of the Duomo

By Ailinn Santos



A Mindful Moment from a Haunted Homosexual

By Seth Wade

He knows he thinks too damn much. Someone once told him he was about as stable as a phoenix. Which makes sense, because he has also been told on multiple occasions that he was flaming. And all of this makes sense now, despite his thinking too much, as to why his thoughts are still looping in dread about muffins and ghosts.

Earlier this morning in the dining hall he stood far longer than he should have stood, standing in the line of the baked goods bar, staring at a plate of *Mindful Ginger Muffins*.

Mindful. Ginger. Muffins.

And he was consumed with the following emotions and questions.

- | | |
|----------|--|
| Wonder | How did they bake in mindfulness? Where did they harvest it? What does raw mindfulness taste like? Should it be considered seasoning or condiment? Is it gluten free? |
| Fear | How mindful are these muffins? Are they sentient? If they're sentient, can he in good conscience devour another conscience? Will another baked treat—a vengeful strudel, perhaps—hunt him down and try to eat him as he so ate from the plate of <i>Mindful Ginger Muffins</i> ? |
| Jealousy | Is this muffin more mindful than him? Has it achieved more balance in its crumbly life than he has? Is the <i>Mindful Ginger Muffin</i> better at being present, better at |

being aware of itself and its surroundings than him?
Does it go to yoga on the weekends or practice self-care
with daily breathing exercises?

His mind buzzed, caught between realities. He imagined slices of dancing *Awareness Avocado Toast* giggling at his pitiful understanding of sustainability. *Self-Care Maple-Glazed Sausages* huddled together to plot their revenge and bottles of *Mango Lime Justice Juice* began babbling about digital detoxing.

He became so unnerved he lost his appetite entirely. He tried focusing on the reality of his footsteps—left, right, left, right—as he left the dining hall, ignoring the haunting implications left by the *Mindful Ginger Muffins*. He calmed himself. Until he saw slathered on the wall: *UVM PLEDGES 25% REAL FOOD BY 2020*.

He screamed.

And ran all the way back to his dorm. He flung into bed, shaking. He swiped on his phone. Began numbing himself with hours of random YouTube videos. Creeping towards calm.

But—between a video of a cat being cute and a kid being cruel: an advertisement for a ghost hunter show called *Queer Ghost Hunters*.

Queer. Ghost. Hunters.

Which at first doesn't send him spiraling. Perhaps the show was a regular ghost hunting show, but with hunters representing the fabulous LGBTQA+ spectrum. Another step in the march towards increased diversity in media representation. But—the trailer started playing.

And it began with an androgynous white overweight ghost hunter with an orange fauxhawk and black sunglasses juggling five boxes of filming equipment with the wiggling letters *GAY GHOSTS ARE OUT THERE* flashing. And the trailer kept going. Folks were labeled either as *STRAIGHT ALLY* or by their non-heterosexual sexuality. A bisexual transgender woman with an eyepatch talked about sleuthing around an abandoned prison. An asexual cisgender man said he's super hyped to find ghosts convicted of sodomy. One homosexual non-binary person said they want to ask ghosts questions like *would*

you have changed your gender and are you a top or bottom in the afterlife? Then there was a scene of a dangling boom mic and a flashlight shining into a dark tunnel where someone asked *is anyone there* and a muffled voice was captioned as replying with a *haaay!*

He couldn't believe what he was watching, that this was a real thing playing on his phone right now. But—no, he clicks on the advertisement link from the trailer, and it is legitimate. He reads the banner. *Queer Ghost Hunters: A Team of Real People Contacting Queer Ghosts. A Docu-series.*

A. Docu-seiries. About queer ghost hunters harassing gay ghosts.

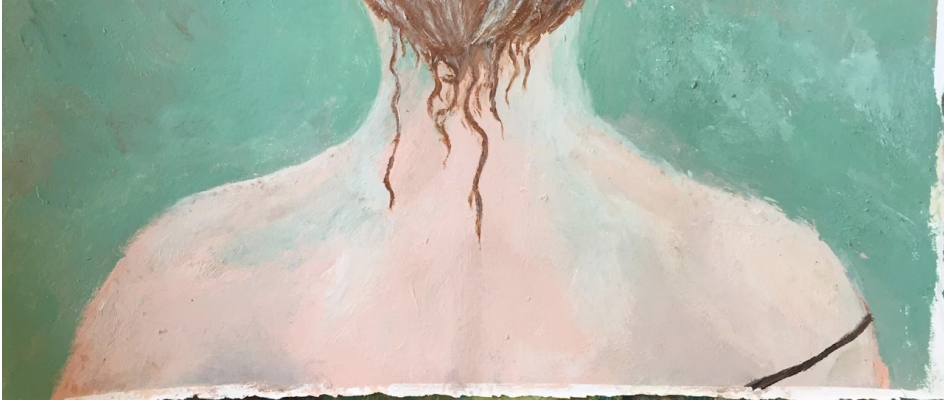
He scrolls to the bottom and sees a group picture of the ghost hunters chilling on a picnic in a graveyard and—on this table: a huge plate of *Mindful Ginger Muffins*.

And now he's bursting into tears. Thinking too damn much. He thinks he's real, so he wonders: will he end up as a gay ghost hunted by gay ghost hunters fueled by *Mindful Ginger Muffins*? Who would be more alive—the *Mindful Ginger Muffin* or him as a ghost?

He doesn't know because he thinks just too damn much.

Dear Neck [Despite All This]

By Christina Maginosa



I want to thank you
for when my hands betray my illusion of confidence,
you maintain me.

Holding me high. Aligned. Each
segment
of my spine clicking into place. Never letting it slip
that sometimes I decide, gasoline or groceries.

I am grateful
for my entire body, not just you.
How it remembers how to drive
even while my mind drifts
to language.
I guess you do always twist to check
before I change lanes

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but my feet know to brake before I do.

I am sorry for the times
you were choked by turtlenecks
and Nineties necklaces.
My dreams so often end
with you guillotined.

The doctor says I shouldn't crack you anymore.
I can't help but crave
that relief, release, stress you hold
for me each time you clank.

I don't mean to blame you for the migraines
but the acupuncturist does.
Needles and cups aimed at you.
Trying to suck the damage, the bad,
I have caused.

My cross has been jabbing you
since First Communion.
I know
I haven't been to Mass
for years but I still
trust Him
to protect you.

I'm sorry for high school
when I smothered you in cheap concealer
thick as Elmer's glue
over the speckled purple pain
someone else left on you.

Dear Neck,
despite all of this, I think
you are my backbone,
the one who keeps me tall.

So thanks,
Christina Mignosa

Ode to Lie

By Kai Jie Cai

This is violating the principle of Truth
I speak Truth
This is the preconceived notion of Truth.
I cannot use mere and analytical intellect
Overcome (Nature)
Men sign women
Why are you not intelligent?
Women sign men
Why are you not LOVELY?
Since these two nature encounter together.
Then, the world is ugly.
The world has a full of lies.
Sometime, I feel the world is ugly.
I cannot handle with the reality.
So, I cannot.
I cannot handle the reality of lies.
The lie has to follow with the principle of capital and reputation.
I just cannot handle the reality of jealousy.
It lies to me, and hurt me.
I hate lie.
I prefer a world with no extreme emotions.

Aubade *for G.W.D.*

By Emma Highfield

My muse, I watch
while your mind
strings smoke through
scenes you've never seen.
The slope of your shoulder blades,

the shape of your form under
creased linen is stunning. Your eyelids
are lacquered in lead. Pink
tulip lips parted, your breath
tapering the stagnant air.

Sun creeps through the window,
his fingernails sharpened
to points, threatening the lack
of space between.
Let's sail until the sea

turns to crystalline
and sugarcane lines
our horizon,
where Sunlight would never
dare to tear me from

your skin. When I leave
your bed of pomegranates

dipped from golden
shrubby, you'll
still seep through my pores

to stain my creamy
calcium in hydrangeas,
towels warm from the dryer,
and starlight. I'll ache
to return to your bed,
your belly,
you.

Pest Zapper

By Christina Mignosa

Nothing felt freer than the two-hour drive
home, your step-father's dairy farm,
after I deposited you and your shit on his lawn,

Xbox, unread books, frayed toothbrush,
cum-stained boxers, five pairs of Nikes,
even that colander that left my pasta soggy,

that is until I got home and found a spider
hanging
precariously above my bed,

what used to be our bed, taunting me
and threatening my divisive independence
because you used to remove all the spiders,

carrying them to the door as carefully as you
avoided getting a job, but now you are gone,
thank God,

and I am left alone in this room
save the fucking spider
and once or twice I even considered

downloading Tinder just to get a man
into this room

to get rid of the damn spider

until I realized I'm not that weak,
and I am not spaghetti cooked for twenty minutes
in need of some sauce to cover its inedible qualities

but the stilettos that would have broken your toes
and straight-rum you would have spat out,
so when that spider descended once more

I ordered a fly zapper off Amazon,
waited two weeks, smoked a joint
and whacked that pest into evaporation

thinking just perhaps
 I *could*, in fact,
live on my own forever.

A Sketch of a Bernini Statue

By Ailinn Santos



Dawn is Coming

By Christina Mignosa

Through the fire of the lamp-lit night
we danced among the clove scarred citrus
making gasoline snow outside the convenience store
and drove too slow down cypress lined roads.

We danced among the clove scarred citrus
to the house with the orange cabinets.
Drove too slow down cypress lined roads
trying not to let the night pass.

The house with the orange cabinets;
it had to be cheap, we had no jobs
so we devoured the poetry of each other
and plaited limbs like bread.

It had to be cheap, we had no jobs.
Popcorn smuggled to the Roxy
and we plaited limbs like bread.
Drinking chai out of flasks,

we smuggled kisses at the Roxy.
Burning laughter like school crushes
as we drank chai out of flasks
through the fire of the lamp-lit night.

Ode to Promise

By Kai Jie Cai

Still remember the hotel room's advertisement that day
Still keeping that smile while Spirit haunting background room;
Silence City simile a fast underground train in that morning
Wandering on the endless city street and long road striping.
Still remember that tan dim light portraying on round face
Still warm up that lunch box is packed with intimacy;
The profile silhouette captures me a state of ecstasy
Only tears allow me to glance it earnestly.
Still remember the sounds of guitar chords that day
Still remember the sounds of melody's vibration;
The sounds of vocal cross through every corner street light
Walking on the street is following that endless sounds.
Forget about mortality feeling forget about Self
Missing the promissory note maple leaves remains in the sky.
If separation is real, Shakespeare's tragedy
Forget about promise I might not remember
Missing the promissory note the calculus of redemption.
It does not matter how much Courage and Confident thou have.
I will still recognize thee at the end of mortality

Vantage Point favors no form or content above any other. We strive to publish writing that evokes and art that thinks. Our success is impossible without the creative talents of our contributors who continue to reawaken the journal's spirit.

*Thank you to everyone who contributed to this issue.
Vantage Point wouldn't be possible without you!*